

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Reagan, Ronald



Director, Office of Legislative Liaison 27 January 1986

NOTE TO: DCI
DDCI

o Deja vu. Submitted for State of the Union speech in 1976 when and I were together in the DO.

STAT

o Except for reference to Portugal on page 3 and slight modification at the beginning, it could be used today as is.

cab

Charles A. Briggs

✓ cc: George Lauder

14 JAN 1976

provided the White House for
possible inclusion in the
State of the Union message.

During the last year we have witnessed in the course of congressional investigations of the Central Intelligence Agency an unprecedented public debate on our foreign covert action involvements in the past two decades. Through public hearings in the Congress, the unauthorized leakage of highly sensitive classified information and aggressive investigative reporting by the media, reports of covert foreign operations have been publicly revealed without regard to the foreign policy consequences and the serious adverse effect on the credibility and effectiveness of our intelligence service. These disclosures have been a source of consternation and embarrassment to our foreign friends and allies and have provided our enemies with an unceasing flow of information to discredit our government and undermine its foreign policies in ~~critical~~ areas of the world. Despite the fact that such covert action involvements were judged by former Presidents and Congresses to be vital to the national interest of the United States, we are now confronted with hindsight judgments labeling these actions as wrong. How quickly we forget the foreign crises that have confronted our government over the years. For example, the dark days immediately following the end of the second World War as the "iron curtain" descended over East Europe and the Soviet Union moved aggressively to extend its influence into a war-weary and impoverished Western Europe. Covert operations undertaken at that time to assist struggling democratic political parties and institutions to counter Soviet subversions were undertaken for

C/SS/CAG/

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the highest moral motives and with the firm belief of the Congress and American people that our cause and that of our allies was a just one. These actions were not intended to keep unpopular regimes in power but rather to keep democracy alive in the world. Our government was willingly supported in this effort by a broad range of private Americans and their organizations who shared a common perspective of the grave threat confronting us at that time. Newly emerging former colonial countries from Korea in the north to Burma in the south quickly found themselves struggling against communist supported insurgent movements or outright aggression. As in Europe, covert action by the CIA was extensively employed in Asia to resist these efforts. For example, in the Indochina war covert paramilitary action in Laos succeeded in tying up large numbers of North Vietnamese military forces which would have otherwise have been directed against American forces fighting in Vietnam. This was accomplished with a few hundred CIA advisors and at a comparatively low cost in money and material. After ten years the battle lines in Laos were approximately what they were at the start. Despite the tragedy of the Vietnam war, I think we can look back with a sense of national pride on our foreign policy accomplishments. A large number of countries have survived their struggle for independence and the prospects for long term stability were much improved.

The emergence of a communist state in Cuba brought the threat of communist insurgency into the hemisphere for the first time. In the early 1960's Latin America had become the target of an all-out

attempt by Cuba, with Soviet support, to export the Cuban revolution. Cuban supported guerrilla movements were underway in at least six Latin American countries. Covert action here too played a vital role in quietly providing advice and assistance to friendly governments--when asked for--to suppress communist insurgencies. Other operations were also initiated to help treat the root causes of insurgency in the fields of labor, youth and students, rural and urban development.

The problems confronting us abroad today are no less vital to our national interest or threatening to peace and stability in the world than those with which we had to deal in the past. Our foreign adversaries deny themselves no forms of action to advance their interest and undermine ours. Although our policy of seeking a detente with the Soviet Union has enhanced the prospects for peaceful solutions to many of the world's problems, it has not diminished the Soviet Union's propensity for international troublemaking. On the contrary, the Soviet leaders have publicly proclaimed that detente does not mean an end of the East-West ideological struggle. It is the avowed policy of the Soviet Union to export its communist ideology by subversion and military intervention wherever the opportunity presents itself. We need look no further than the situation in Angola and Portugal today for confirmation of this fact. In Angola massive Soviet and Cuban military involvement threatens the peaceful transition of that country from colonial status to an independent state freely governed by its own people. In Portugal within the last year we witnessed efforts by the Soviet

supported Communist Party of Portugal to seize power despite the lack of a popular mandate from the Portuguese people. Other problems are looming just over the horizon. Many countries, particularly in the third world, remain highly vulnerable to foreign subversive intervention. The situation in the Middle East in particular remains highly volatile with serious implications to the world's energy supplies. Terrorism has emerged as a weapon of international blackmail.

Our intention is to seek resolution of these problems through rational negotiation and conventional diplomatic means. However, we must live in the world we find, not the world we might wish. Can we afford to turn our backs on our allies and friends abroad who seek covert assistance to resist subversion and aggression when diplomatic means have failed, when overt support is impractical, and when military intervention presents unacceptable risks? Clearly the answer to this question is no. Neither can we afford to enter into such quiet foreign undertakings only to have these publicly aired or leaked to the world at large to the detriment of the operation and those who would cooperate with us abroad.

I ask the Congress therefore: To clearly reiterate its previously expressed commitment to such operations; to establish such controls and supervision over such operations as the American people desire; and then structure itself to keep such matters secret.